

IDENTIFICATION OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF DROPOUTS
IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
(WITHIN A SELECTED AREA OF DES MOINES)

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Charles Douglas Buchanan
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Charles Douglas Buchanan

Approved by Committee:

James F. Heger
Chairman

Maurice F. Allen

William F. Allen
Dean of the Graduate Division

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CHAPTER I

I. INTRODUCTION

The failure of many young people to complete their schooling has caused concern among educators for many years. The dropouts from today's schools will continue to be problems in the future, both to themselves and to society because of the lack of development of their fullest potential.

Each year more than one-third of the nation's young people drop out of school before completing senior high school. If the current dropout rate continues, 7.5 million youths will drop out of school during the next decade.¹

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It was the purpose of this study to determine factors which may be used in the identification of potential dropouts while they are still in the elementary school.

III. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

In recent years, concern for the sizable proportion of American youths who fail to complete high school has increased significantly. This concern has prompted many

¹High School Dropouts, A Report Prepared by the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (Washington, D.C.: Office of Education, 1963).

studies of high school graduates and dropouts. Although much effort has been invested in the search for a satisfactory solution, the problem of the early school leaver is still a major one in many schools across the nation.

Thus far, much attention has focused upon the high school. Various aspects of the high school program have been examined in connection with early withdrawal. But until now, only limited attention has been given to the question of identifying potential dropouts early enough to permit the development of sound remedial programs.

The importance of the elementary school in the early identification of the potential dropout is paramount. It is probable that many problems contributing to the withdrawal of students in later grades are first felt during the elementary school years. It is clearly evident that any effort to keep these pupils in school should begin as early as possible in their elementary careers.¹

IV. NEED

The lack of identifying factors and absence of information concerning potential dropouts in the elementary school express a need for this study. Pupils who are not identified early and given the help they need to eliminate or overcome their problems leave school just as soon as they

¹Hugh A. Livingston, "Key to the Dropout Problem: The Elementary School," Elementary School Journal, LIX (February, 1959), 267-270.

find the opportunity to do so. Ways of identifying these potential dropouts in time to apply remedial procedures are needed.¹

V. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED

The following terms appear in the context of this study and for the sake of clarity are here defined.

Elementary school. The elementary school is interpreted to specify grades kindergarten through sixth.

Junior high school. The junior high school includes grades seventh through ninth.

Senior high school. The senior high school includes the grades tenth through twelfth.

Feeder elementary school. The term "feeder elementary school" is used to designate one of the elementary schools whose graduates live in the Woodrow Wilson Junior High School district of Des Moines, Iowa.

VI. LIMITATIONS

This study was limited geographically to the east side of Des Moines and, more specifically, to elementary schools within the Woodrow Wilson Junior High School

¹W.H. McCreary, and Donald Kitch, "Now Hear Youth," A Report on the California Cooperative Study of School Dropouts and Graduates (Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1953).

district. This study included only those students who attended the feeder elementary schools Brooks, Phillips, Stowe, and Willard during the school years 1958-59, 1959-60, and 1960-61, and who voluntarily terminated their education before completing twelfth grade. Furthermore, the student must have been a member of the sixth grade class of one of the previously mentioned feeder schools for the designated school years.

VII. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Most of the literature available on the study of dropouts is concerned only from the standpoint of the secondary school. This again points out the need for this study. However, some research has been conducted on the identification of potential dropouts in the elementary school.

Watson commented:

...guidance research is confirming what many elementary teachers have suspected for a long time; that potential dropouts can be spotted in the early grades.¹

Kelley stated further that:

There is a great deal of valid research which shows that high school dropouts can be identified very early. Some say that they can be located in the third grade; some contend that they can be detected

¹Dorothy Watson, "A Teacher Looks at Guidance," The National Elementary Principal, XLIII (April, 1964), 38.

as early as the kindergarten. Therefore the dropout is not strictly a secondary school problem but also an elementary school one. Perhaps different and better treatment in the elementary school might be one of the most fruitful ways of reducing the number of youths who leave school before graduation.¹

While it is legally impossible for youngsters to leave school before a certain age, for all practical purposes, many "drop out" of the elementary school.

Among people who have done research in this area, there is agreement that the dropout does not hurriedly decide to withdraw from school. Dropping out is but the final step in a long process, and often follows several years of unsatisfactory academic progress. . . . Although a student physically leaves the secondary school, psychologically he has left school while he is still in the elementary grades.²

Miller, reporting in the May, 1963, issue of School Life, states:

Fortunately, all of the school's time has not yet run out. As long as pupils are only potential dropouts, the school still has an opportunity to discover their plight and find ways to hold them.³

Bert I. Greene, Educational Research Consultant for the Wayne County Board of Education of Detroit, Michigan, in discussing reasons for withdrawal commented:

¹Earl C. Kelley, "Seeds of Drop Outs," Childhood Education, XXXIX (May, 1963), 420.

²Bert I. Greene, "Dropouts and the Elementary School," National Elementary Principal, XLII (November, 1962), 52.

³Leonard M. Miller, "The Dropout: Schools Search for Clues to His Problems," School Life, XLV (May, 1963), 5.

Almost every major study of dropouts since 1947 indicates that the chief reason for leaving was dissatisfaction with school. While this category is too broadly defined, it is clear that those students who have dropped out have experienced a series of difficulties that led them to develop negative attitudes towards school. If we are to help these youngsters, we must reach them when they begin to develop these negative attitudes --- in the elementary school.¹

Not only is the elementary school an important factor in the dropout problem, but many educators are also aware of the importance of the home environment in a student's choosing to drop out.

In a sense, the number of young people who quit school before graduation each year represents a failure on the part of the schools to influence and stimulate reluctant students. Yet many of these students may have been doomed to drop out even before they enrolled in school. They came from families and neighborhoods where books are not considered important and where quitting school at an early age is a normal pattern.²

These two factors of school and family may lead a youngster either to the proper adjustment toward learning or onto the road toward dropping out. If youngsters are to be held in school until graduation, we must make use of this knowledge and identify potential dropouts early in their school careers. Only then can we provide suitable programs for these students.³

¹Greene, loc. cit.

²Eli E. Cohen, "The Drop Out Problem --- A Growing Educational Concern Today," National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin, CCLXIV (April, 1961), 279.

³Greene, op. cit., p. 54.

Coplein suggests techniques for use in the study of dropouts. One of the techniques he suggests is the study of certain personal characteristics that appear on the students' cumulative records or on exit interviews that the school counselor may use.¹ He suggests the study of such personal characteristics as:

1. The number of schools attended by the student.
2. The sex of the student.
3. The grade in which the student was enrolled when he left school.
4. The race of the student.
5. The educational attainment of the parents of the student.
6. The age of the student, in years and months, when he left school.
7. The socio-economic status of the family of the student.
8. The number of brothers and sisters of the student.
9. The number of grades the student had been retained.
10. The student's marks in school.
11. The intelligence level of the dropout.
12. The student's reading level.
13. The discipline record of the student.

¹Leonard E. Coplein, "Techniques for the Study of Dropouts," Clearing House, XLV (May, 1962), 527-528.

14. The attendance record of the student.
15. The reasons given by the student for leaving.¹

Coplein also suggests some statistical tables that might be compiled by the investigator:

1. The number and percentage of dropouts by school attended and sex.
2. The age of the dropouts at leaving, by years and months, male and female.
3. The grade in which the dropout occurred, number and percentage of both male and female.
4. The education of the fathers, by race and by sex of the dropout.
5. A comparison of mean intelligence scores of dropouts by race and sex.
6. The relationship between intelligence and retardation of dropouts by race and sex.
7. The relationship between intelligence and reading level by sex and by grade.²

Livingston, in his study, focused on those dropouts who did not enter high school. He started with the group entering first grade in 1944-1945. They would have graduated in 1956. The most significant factors he found characteristic of the child who withdrew before ninth grade were:

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., pp. 529-530.

1. All of them were retained at least one grade.
2. Eighty-four per cent were retained at least two grades.
3. Only one per cent of the graduates were retained one grade.
4. None of the graduates were retained more than one grade.¹

Other factors Livingston considered pertinent were:

1. More than three-fourths of the dropouts did not participate in any formal school activity.
2. More than eighty-five per cent of the dropouts were regarded as less than normal in their participation in the informal life of the classroom and playground, while sixty per cent were classified by their teachers as non-participants or isolates.
3. Eighty-five per cent were below average in scholarship, and one-third were in the lower ten per cent of their class.
4. At the beginning of seventh grade, thirty-six per cent of the dropouts were reading two grade levels below their placement.
5. Fifty-two per cent of the dropouts were from homes broken by death or divorce, and only forty per cent lived with both parents.

¹Livingston, loc. cit.

6. Only twelve per cent of the parents of these dropouts had an education beyond tenth grade. None of them had finished high school, and twenty-one per cent had not completed the eighth grade.
7. Only eight per cent of the parents of the dropouts held jobs that were not semi-skilled or unskilled.
8. The majority of the dropouts lived in the less desirable residential areas.¹

It is at the elementary level that a program to identify the potential dropout can, and should, be instituted and that a program to prevent dropping out should be begun.

We can no longer argue that dropouts are a problem for the secondary schools alone. Both the elementary and secondary schools must recognize their responsibility, and, by working together, find ways to keep the potential dropout in the classroom.²

VIII. PROCEDURES

Permission to carry out this study was sought and secured from the administrative heads of the Des Moines Independent School District.

Class lists were then compiled of the sixth grade classes of the feeder elementary schools to Woodrow Wilson Junior High School for the school years 1958-1959, 1959-1960, and 1960-1961. These students were then traced

¹Ibid.

²Greene, loc cit.

through junior high school and senior high school. Those who voluntarily dropped out before completing twelfth grade were identified. The elementary cumulative records of these voluntary dropouts were then examined.

In accordance with the information available on the cumulative record forms and the techniques suggested by Coplein for the study of dropouts, the following information was examined on the cumulative record of each voluntary dropout:

1. The number of grades retained.
2. The number of absences each year.
3. The number of below average grades.
4. The reading level of the pupil.
5. The personality growth rating by his teachers.
6. The number of schools attended.
7. With whom the dropout lived.
8. The number of siblings.
9. The age relationship of the siblings to the dropout.
10. The occupation of the parents.
11. Standardized test scores.
12. The parent-teacher conference summaries.

After the data was collected, it was systematically analyzed and tabulated in order that conclusions and recommendations could be drawn.

CHAPTER II

PRESENTATION OF DATA

I. THE SCHOOL ORGANIZATION

The city of Des Moines, Iowa, maintains an independent school district comprised of fifty-seven elementary schools, twelve junior high schools, and five high schools.

Students of four Des Moines elementary schools were the subjects of this study, those schools being Brooks Elementary School, Phillips Elementary School, Stowe Elementary School, and Willard Elementary School. It is worthy of note that these elementary schools are located in an economic area of Des Moines ranging from lower to middle class. It is also of significance that the dropout rate in this geographic area of Des Moines is higher than in other parts of the Des Moines public school system.

These four elementary schools are in the attendance district of one of two junior high schools, Mae Goodrell Junior High School or Woodrow Wilson Junior High School. Upon completion of junior high school, a student in Des Moines may attend the high school in whose attendance area he resides or he may attend Des Moines Technical High School if he desires specialized vocational education.

In the case of this study, the majority of the students attended the secondary schools Woodrow Wilson Junior High School and East Des Moines High School.

II. ESTABLISHING A CLASS LIST

In order to determine the class membership of the specific years desired, it was necessary for the author to examine the microfilmed list of the Office Record Cards for the elementary schools contained in the study.

From the list obtained, further investigation was necessary to determine which of these students had not graduated from a Des Moines public high school. This was accomplished by studying the list of graduating seniors compiled by the public high schools of Des Moines.

Once the list of non-graduated students was obtained it was possible to determine which of the students had dropped out of school by studying the file of students who had withdrawn from the Des Moines Public Schools. In this manner it was possible to determine the exact number and names of the students wished to be studied.

III. NUMBERS OF DROPOUTS

There were 1,111 students in the combined class lists for sixth grade in the four elementary schools studied for the school years 1958-1959, 1959-1960, and 1960-1961. Table I indicates that there were 163 students, or 14.67 per cent, who voluntarily terminated their education before graduation from high school. Of these 163 students 84, or 51.53 per cent, were males and 79, or 48.37 per cent, were females.

TABLE I
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF DROPOUTS FROM VARIOUS DES MOINES
SCHOOLS ATTENDED BY 1,111 SUBJECT STUDENTS

School Dropped	Number Males	Number Females	Total	Percentage
East High	47	40	87	53.4
Tech High	19	18	37	22.7
North High	8	6	14	8.6
Lincoln High	1	2	3	1.8
Irving Junior High	0	1	1	0.6
Hiatt Junior High	1	3	4	2.5
Wilson Junior High	6	8	14	8.6
Harding Junior High	1	0	1	0.6
Goodrell Junior High	1	1	2	1.2
TOTALS	84	79	163	100.0

Table II presents the number of students attending each elementary school and the number and percentage of dropouts for each school for the years involved in the study.

The class lists studied of Brooks Elementary School contained a total of 270 students for the combined years, of which a total of 53 dropped out of school. This is a dropout rate of 19.6 per cent. Of these 53 students who dropped out, 24 were males and 29 were females.

TABLE II

THE NUMBER OF EVENTUAL DROPOUTS COMPARED TO THE TOTAL SIXTH
GRADE ENROLLMENT, BY YEAR, FOR FOUR DES MOINES
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS FOR THE SCHOOL YEARS
1958-1959, 1959-1960, AND 1960-1961

School Year	Phillips Elementary		Brooks Elementary		Willard Elementary		Stowe Elementary	
	No.	Enr.	No.	Enr.	No.	Enr.	No.	Enr.
1958-1959	14	99	22	88	20	114	2	81
1959-1960	15	87	14	95	16	99	6	85
1960-1961	13	81	17	87	21	123	3	72
TOTALS	42	267	53	270	57	336	11	238

It was found that 267 students who were members of the sixth grade classes for the years of the study at Phillips Elementary School produced 42, or 15.7 per cent, students who failed to complete their education. Of these students, 25 were males and 17 were females.

Stowe Elementary School had an enrollment of 238 students in sixth grade classes of 1958-1959, 1959-1960, and 1960-1961. From this total number, it was found that 11 terminated their education prior to graduation from high school. Six of these students were males and five were females.

The largest enrollment of the four schools studied was that of Willard Elementary School, which had a total of 336 students during the years of interest to this study. It was determined that 57 of these students, 29 males and 28 females,

voluntarily withdrew from school. This represents a dropout rate of 17.0 per cent.

IV. GRADE DROPPED

Table III indicates the grade attended or the grade just completed by the student at the time of dropping. The largest percentage, 36.2 per cent, dropped out at the eleventh grade. This is an anticipated figure due to the fact that eleventh grade is the grade in which the majority of students reach the legal age (16) which permits them to withdraw from school.

The alarming figure in this table is the percentage of students withdrawing from school in the twelfth grade. In excess of one-quarter, 25.2 per cent, of the pupils studied dropped out of school during their senior year of high school.

TABLE III

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGES OF GRADES FROM WHICH 163
DES MOINES STUDENTS DROPPED FROM SCHOOL

Grade	Males	Females	Total	Percentage
12	21	20	41	25.2
11	32	27	59	36.2
10	21	17	38	23.3
9	9	9	18	11.0
8	0	6	6	3.7
7	1	0	1	.6
TOTALS	84	79	163	100.0

V. REASONS FOR DROPPING

The reasons for leaving school, as they were given on the school records of the dropouts, are shown in Tables IV and V. In all of the cases studied the reason for dropping out was given by a school official and not by the dropout. However, this was done after consultation with the dropout concerning his reason for terminating school.

When reasons for dropping out are separated according to sex of the dropout, the figures are quite contrasting. Over one-half of the males, 53.6 per cent, dropped out of school to go to work, while only 13.9 per cent of the females gave work as the reason for dropping. More than one-half of the females, 51.9 per cent, quit school to get married, while none of the males gave marriage as their reason for withdrawal.

TABLE IV

REASONS GIVEN BY 84 MALES WHO DROPPED OUT OF THE DES MOINES SCHOOLS BEFORE COMPLETING HIGH SCHOOL

Reason for Leaving	Number	Percentage
Work	45	53.6
Marriage	0	0.0
Service	9	10.7
Health	3	3.6
Lack of Interest	8	9.5
To Stay Home	4	4.8
Refuse to Attend	9	10.7
Sixteen Years of Age	6	7.1

TABLE V

REASONS GIVEN BY 79 FEMALES WHO DROPPED OUT OF THE DES
MOINES SCHOOLS BEFORE COMPLETING HIGH SCHOOL

Reason for Leaving	Number	Percentage
Work	11	13.9
Marriage	41	51.9
Health	3	3.8
Lack of Interest	2	2.5
To Stay Home	9	11.4
Refuse to Attend	4	5.1
Sixteen Years of Age	9	11.4

VI. RETENTION

It is interesting to note that a relatively low percentage of the dropouts studied were retained one or more grades. Livingston, in his study, found that all of the dropouts he studied had been retained at least one grade, and that 84 per cent were retained at least two grades.¹

Table VI indicates that 24.5 per cent, or 40 of the 163 students who dropped, had been retained at least one grade. Looking further, it is found that only one male and two females had been retained twice.

¹Hugh A. Livingston, "Key to the Dropout Problem: The Elementary School," Elementary School Journal, LIX (February, 1959), 267-270.

TABLE VI

NUMBERS AND PERCENTAGES OF RETENTIONS, BY GRADE, OF 163 DES MOINES DROPOUTS WHILE IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Grade	Males Retained	Females Retained	Total Retained	Percentage
Kindergarten	0	0	0	0.0
First	6	4	10	6.1
Second	10	9	19	11.6
Third	3	3	6	3.7
Fourth	4	0	4	2.5
Fifth	0	1	1	0.6
Sixth	0	0	0	0.0
TOTALS	23	17	40	24.5

In accordance with this author's study, it appears that the retention factor is of relatively minor importance as a contributing element to termination of a student's education as compared to the study previously mentioned (i.e., Livingston).

VII. ABSENCES

Table VII indicates the attendance records, by grade level, of the subjects studied. It can be noted that the majority of the subjects missed between five and twenty days of school, on the average, each year. Closer analysis reveals that:

1. In kindergarten, 68 per cent of the pupils were absent more than 20 days.

2. The greater number of first grade students were absent between 10 and 14.5 days.
3. The largest percentage of students in grades two through six were absent between 5 and 9.5 days.

TABLE VII

THE NUMBER OF DAYS ABSENT, BY PERCENTAGE, OF 163 DES MOINES DROPOUTS DURING THEIR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GRADES

Days Absent	Percentage in Grade:						
	K	1	2	3	4	5	6
0- 4.5	1.1	3.1	7.5	13.2	12.1	12.4	19.8
5- 9.5	6.5	18.6	33.0	28.3	30.3	26.8	35.6
10-14.5	11.8	31.9	22.7	27.3	18.1	22.7	13.9
15-19.5	12.9	17.5	17.0	17.2	20.4	10.3	9.9
20-24.5	20.4	7.2	5.7	9.0	8.0	10.3	9.9
25-29.5	18.3	9.3	4.7	1.0	5.1	10.3	3.9
30-34.5	9.7	2.1	2.8	0.0	2.0	3.1	3.0
35-39.5	6.4	4.1	1.9	2.0	2.0	2.1	0.0
40-44.5	6.4	1.0	0.0	0.0	2.0	0.0	1.0
45-49.5	0.0	2.1	1.9	0.0	0.0	1.0	0.0
50 or more	6.5	3.1	2.8	2.0	0.0	1.0	3.0

In looking at Table VIII, it can be seen that the median number of days missed by a kindergarten student in this subject group is almost two full weeks of school days above that of the next highest median. A review of Table VI reveals that

although a high rate of absence predominated during the kindergarten year of the subject students, there were no resulting retentions in this grade.

TABLE VIII

THE MEDIAN NUMBER OF DAYS ABSENT OF 163 DES MOINES DROPOUTS
DURING EACH YEAR OF THEIR ELEMENTARY SCHOOLING

Grade	Days Absent		All Subjects
	Males	Females	
Kindergarten	26.0	23.0	24.0
First	13.5	17.5	14.5
Second	12.0	12.0	12.0
Third	11.0	13.5	11.5
Fourth	12.5	13.5	13.0
Fifth	11.0	15.0	13.0
Sixth	9.0	10.0	9.0

VIII. NUMBER OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS ATTENDED

Research indicated that of the 163 dropouts studied by the author, 60.8 per cent attended only one elementary school. Only one subject attended as many as five schools during his elementary education. Table IX presents the statistics for this factor.

IX. WITH WHOM THE DROPOUT LIVED

Livingston, in his study, found that only 40 per cent

TABLE IX
THE NUMBER OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS ATTENDED
BY 163 DES MOINES DROPOUTS

Number of Schools Attended	Males	Females	Total	Percentage
1	52	47	99	60.8
2	16	15	31	19.0
3	9	13	22	13.5
4	6	4	10	6.1
5	1	0	1	0.6

of his subjects lived with both parents.¹ Table X indicates a percentage of more than double this amount for the subjects of this author's study.

TABLE X
WITH WHOM 163 DES MOINES DROPOUTS LIVED WHILE
ENROLLED IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Lived With	Males	Females	Total	Percentage
Both Parents	74	71	145	89.0
Mother Only	8	4	12	7.4
Father Only	0	2	2	1.2
Guardian	2	2	4	2.4

¹Ibid.

X. OCCUPATIONS OF PARENTS

Table XI indicates that the occupation of the largest percentage (42.3) of fathers of the dropouts was that of unskilled labor. Table XII establishes that the greater percentage (62.6) of mothers of the dropouts were housewives not employed outside the home.

It is interesting to note that a sizable percentage (7.4) of the fathers of the dropouts were unemployed. In 41.6 per cent of these cases the mother provided the means of support for the family.

In those cases where the mother of the dropout was living and her occupation was known, 33.8 per cent were employed outside the home.

TABLE XI
OCCUPATIONS OF THE FATHERS OF 163 DROPOUTS
IN THE DES MOINES SCHOOLS

Occupation	Males	Females	Total	Percentage
Professional	0	0	0	0.0
Semi-Professional	0	0	0	0.0
Managerial	0	1	1	0.6
Office and Clerical	0	0	0	0.0
Service and Sales	3	15	18	11.0
Skilled Labor	27	21	48	29.5
Unskilled Labor	40	29	69	42.3
Unemployed	6	6	12	7.4
Deceased or Retired	4	4	8	4.9
Unknown	4	3	7	4.3

TABLE XII
OCCUPATIONS OF THE MOTHERS OF 163 DROPOUTS
IN THE DES MOINES SCHOOLS

Occupation	Males	Females	Total	Percentage
Professional	0	0	0	0.0
Semi-Professional	0	0	0	0.0
Managerial	0	0	0	0.0
Office and Clerical	5	6	11	6.8
Service and Sales (Outside the Home)	19	12	31	19.0
Housewife	54	48	102	62.6
Skilled Labor	0	0	0	0.0
Unskilled Labor	3	7	10	6.1
Deceased	0	1	1	0.6
Unknown	3	5	8	4.9

XI. GRADES

It was found that a significant majority of the dropouts studied received below average grades while they were enrolled in elementary school. The figures of Tables XIII and XIV indicate that, in the elementary classroom teacher's ratings of the dropouts, 71.09 per cent of the marks given the male dropouts and 64.4 per cent of the marks given the female dropouts fell within the below average category.

Research also points out that only 2.05 per cent of the marks given the male dropouts and 2.53 per cent of the marks given the female dropouts fell within the above average

TABLE XIII

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ACADEMIC RATINGS FOR 84 MALE DROPOUTS
AS ASSIGNED BY DES MOINES CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Grade	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Unknown
Kindergarten	2	20	59	3
First	3	17	60	4
Second	2	14	67	1
Third	1	20	56	7
Fourth	2	21	55	6
Fifth	2	18	59	5
Sixth	0	17	62	5
TOTALS	12	127	418	31

TABLE XIV

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ACADEMIC RATINGS FOR 79 FEMALE DROPOUTS
AS ASSIGNED BY DES MOINES CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Grade	Above Average	Average	Below Average	Unknown
Kindergarten	3	24	50	2
First	1	25	51	2
Second	1	26	51	1
Third	2	27	49	1
Fourth	4	22	50	3
Fifth	2	25	51	1
Sixth	1	22	54	2
TOTALS	14	171	356	12

category in academic achievement.

It is also noted that the typical dropout had scholarship problems from the time he entered kindergarten until the time he left sixth grade.

XII. CONDUCT

At the end of each school year, the conduct of each subject was rated by the elementary home room teacher. It was found that the majority of ratings given the female dropout, 65.8 per cent, fell within the "good" conduct category while only 27.9 per cent of the conduct ratings given the male dropouts were classified as "good". The largest percentage of ratings given the male dropouts fell within the "fair" conduct category.

Further figures illustrate that while only 5.6 per cent of the total ratings given the female dropouts fell within the "poor" conduct category, 22.3 per cent of the total ratings given the male dropouts were classified as "poor".

Tables XV and XVI indicate an inverse relationship between the grade level and the conduct rating. In general, the higher the grade level the lower the conduct rating for the subject dropouts.

XIII. SIBLINGS

The number of brothers and sisters of both the male and female dropouts are indicated in Table XVII on page 28. The mean number of siblings for the female dropout is 2.75.

TABLE XV

ELEMENTARY CONDUCT RATINGS FOR 84 MALE DROPOUTS
IN THE DES MOINES SCHOOLS

Grade	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Unknown
Kindergarten	0	32	41	5	5
First	0	30	44	9	1
Second	0	27	37	19	1
Third	0	22	45	13	4
Fourth	0	16	42	24	2
Fifth	0	21	30	29	4
Sixth	0	16	33	32	3
TOTALS	0	164	272	131	20

TABLE XVI

ELEMENTARY CONDUCT RATINGS FOR 79 FEMALE DROPOUTS
IN THE DES MOINES SCHOOLS

Grade	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	Unknown
Kindergarten	0	54	19	2	4
First	0	53	16	4	6
Second	0	55	16	2	6
Third	0	55	17	2	5
Fourth	0	51	19	4	5
Fifth	0	48	19	6	6
Sixth	0	48	15	11	5
TOTALS	0	364	121	31	37

TABLE XVII
THE NUMBER OF SIBLINGS OF 163 SUBJECT DROPOUTS
FROM THE DES MOINES SCHOOLS

Number of Siblings	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
0	3	5	8	4.9
1	17	9	26	16.0
2	14	24	38	23.3
3	20	22	42	25.8
4	12	5	17	10.4
5	8	6	14	8.6
6	3	2	5	3.1
7	3	0	3	1.8
8	0	3	3	1.8
9	0	0	0	0.0
10	1	0	1	0.6
Unknown	3	3	6	3.7

The mean number of siblings for the male dropout was 2.99.
The mean number of siblings for both male and female dropouts was 2.88.

In 37.5 per cent of the cases, the female dropout was the youngest in the family. In 32.5 per cent of the cases she was the oldest in the family.

The male dropout was the youngest child in the family in 34.6 per cent of the cases and the oldest child in 19.2 per cent of the cases.

All subjects combined, the dropout was the youngest child in the family in 35.87 per cent of the cases and the oldest child in the family in 25 per cent of the cases. In only 4.91 per cent of the cases studied was the dropout an only child.

XIV. LEADERSHIP

It is very apparent from the statistics presented in Tables XVIII, XIX, and XX that the typical subject of this study was very definitely not a leader among his classmates. Over ninety-three per cent of the subjects were rated as not being leaders by their home room teachers. This lack of leadership prevailed for both sexes.

TABLE XVIII

LEADERSHIP RATINGS GIVEN 84 SUBJECT MALE DROPOUTS BY THEIR CLASSROOM TEACHERS IN DES MOINES ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Rating	Number of Males	Percentage of Males
Is a Leader	0	0.0
Is Not a Leader	82	97.6
Unknown	2	2.4

TABLE XIX

LEADERSHIP RATINGS GIVEN 79 SUBJECT FEMALE DROPOUTS BY THEIR CLASSROOM TEACHERS IN DES MOINES ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Rating	Number of Females	Percentage of Females
Is a Leader	5	6.3
Is Not a Leader	71	89.9
Unknown	3	3.8

TABLE XX

LEADERSHIP RATINGS GIVEN 163 SUBJECT DROPOUTS BY THEIR
CLASSROOM TEACHERS IN DES MOINES ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Rating	Number of Subjects	Percentage of Subjects
Is a Leader	5	3.07
Is Not a Leader	153	93.86
Unknown	5	3.07

XV. MATURITY LEVEL

Tables XXI, XXII, and XXIII indicate that the typical subject was rated by the classroom teacher as growing normally during the elementary school years, physically and psychologically. However, it may be significant to note that an inverse pattern existed between the sexes in regard to the subjects who deviated from the level of normal growth. Among the subjects rated as not growing normally, the greater number of male subjects were perceived as immature while the greater number of female subjects were perceived as mature for their age.

TABLE XXI

MATURITY LEVEL RATINGS GIVEN 84 SUBJECT MALE
DROPOUTS BY THEIR CLASSROOM TEACHERS
IN DES MOINES ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Rating	Number of Males	Percentage of Males
Immature for Age	20	23.8
Growing Normally	62	73.8
Mature for Age	1	1.2
Unknown	1	1.2

TABLE XXII

MATURITY LEVEL RATINGS GIVEN 79 SUBJECT FEMALE
DROPOUTS BY THEIR CLASSROOM TEACHERS
IN DES MOINES ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Rating	Number of Females	Percentage of Females
Immature for Age	6	7.6
Growing Normally	55	69.6
Mature for Age	17	21.5
Unknown	1	1.3

TABLE XXIII

MATURITY LEVEL RATINGS GIVEN 163 SUBJECT
DROPOUTS BY THEIR CLASSROOM TEACHERS
IN DES MOINES ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Rating	Number of Subjects	Percentage of Subjects
Immature for Age	26	16.0
Growing Normally	117	71.8
Mature for Age	18	11.0
Unknown	2	1.2

XVI. SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE

Social non-acceptance appeared to be a dominant factor in the elementary school life of the typical subject studied. Tables XXIV, XXV, and XXVI indicate that 70.3 per cent of the males studied, 58.2 per cent of the females studied, and 64.4

per cent of the subjects as a whole were rated as having few, if any, friends.

TABLE XXIV
SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE OF 84 SUBJECT MALE DROPOUTS
AS RATED BY THEIR CLASSROOM TEACHERS
IN DES MOINES ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Acceptance Rating	Number of Males	Percentage of Males
Many Friends	5	5.9
Average in Friendships	13	15.5
Few, But Close, Friends	0	0.0
Few, if Any, Friends	59	70.3
Unknown	7	8.3

TABLE XXV
SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE OF 79 SUBJECT FEMALE DROPOUTS
AS RATED BY THEIR CLASSROOM TEACHERS
IN DES MOINES ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Acceptance Rating	Number of Females	Percentage of Females
Many Friends	3	3.8
Average in Friendships	21	26.6
Few, But Close, Friends	2	2.5
Few, if Any, Friends	46	58.2
Unknown	7	8.9

TABLE XXVI

SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE OF 163 SUBJECT DROPOUTS
AS RATED BY THEIR CLASSROOM TEACHERS
IN DES MOINES ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Acceptance Rating	Number of Subjects	Percentage of Subjects
Many Friends	8	4.9
Average in Friendships	34	20.9
Few, But Close, Friends	2	1.2
Few, if Any, Friends	105	64.4
Unknown	14	8.6

XVII. READING LEVEL

Table XXVII illustrates the results of the reading test given the subject dropouts during their year of enrollment in the fourth grade. At this time, 62.5 per cent of the subjects were reading below their grade level. Of this total, 18.4 per cent were one to one and one-half grade levels behind and 4.9 per cent were one and one-half to two grade levels behind.

The median grade level of all the subjects at the time the reading test was administered was 3.3 grade, and the corresponding mean score placed the subjects at the 3.55 grade level.

XVIII. STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES

Records of the Metropolitan Reading Readiness Test, taken by the subjects in first grade, were available. For

TABLE XXVII

THE FOURTH GRADE READING LEVEL OF 163 DROPOUTS
FROM THE DES MOINES SCHOOLS

Reading Level (Grade)	Number of Males	Number of Females	Total Number	Total Percentage
6.0 and Above	0	0	0	0.0
5.5 - 5.9	2	3	5	3.1
5.0 - 5.4	6	2	8	4.9
4.5 - 4.9	6	8	14	8.6
4.0 - 4.4	8	11	19	11.7
3.5 - 3.9	13	12	25	15.3
3.0 - 3.4	31	16	47	28.8
2.5 - 2.9	9	21	30	18.4
2.0 - 2.4	5	3	8	4.9
1.5 - 1.9	0	0	0	0.0
1.0 - 1.4	0	0	0	0.0
0.5 - 0.9	0	0	0	0.0
0.0 - 0.4	0	0	0	0.0
Unmeasurable	1	0	1	0.6
Unknown	3	3	6	3.7

the males the mean percentile was 30.4, while the median percentile was 20. For the females the mean percentile was 28.6, and the median percentile was 20.

The California Reading Test was given to the subjects in both second and third grades. In second grade the mean

percentile for the males was 27.3 and the median percentile was 20, while in third grade these corresponding percentiles were 30.9 and 20. For the females, in second grade the mean percentile was 28.6 and the median percentile was 30 while in third grade these percentiles were 35 and 30 respectively.

In fourth grade the Otis Mental Ability Test was administered to the subjects. The males scored a mean percentile of 38.4 and a median percentile of 29. The females scored a mean percentile of 33.3 and a median percentile of 40.

The subject students were also given the Iowa Every Pupil Basic Arithmetic Test during their year in fourth grade. The males achieved a mean percentile of 34.1 and a median percentile of 26. The females achieved a mean percentile of 29.2 and a median percentile of 20.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. SUMMARY

It was the purpose of this study to determine factors which might be used in the identification of potential dropouts while they are still in the elementary school. This writer's attempt to locate these factors consisted of the investigation of the records of 163 students from four Des Moines elementary schools. These students, 84 males and 79 females, voluntarily withdrew from school before completing the twelfth grade.

The smallness of the sample and the limited geographical area involved make it difficult to develop generalizations which will be of value beyond the problem at hand. The fact that each dropout should be thought of as a separate problem in himself, different in many respects from any other dropout, limits the value of generalization in the area of individual characteristics. However, it will be of value and some importance to have a general concept of the type of student who is most likely to drop out of school. By identifying the student with an elementary school record characteristic of a dropout's record, remedial measures might be undertaken to minimize the probability that that student will terminate his education prior to graduation from high school.

As a result of the survey taken from the existing school records, the following information was secured:

1. The records indicated that the student was most likely to drop out of school during, or upon completion of, the eleventh grade.
2. The reason most frequently cited for the withdrawal was work for the males and marriage for the females.
3. The number of grades retained in the elementary school appeared to be of little or no significance as a decisive factor in withdrawal from school.
4. The typical dropout was absent more than 20 days in kindergarten, between 10 and 14.5 days in first grade, and between 5 and 9.5 days from then on in the elementary school.
5. One school was attended for the complete elementary education by a majority of the subjects. This indicates a fairly stable physical environment for the subject dropouts.
6. In the majority of cases studied, the dropout lived with both parents.
7. The majority of the fathers of the subject dropouts were employed in unskilled labor, and the majority of the mothers were housewives.
8. Concerning grades, it was noted that the typical dropout was below average in scholarship throughout his years in the elementary school.

9. As the grade level of the eventual dropout increased, there was a tendency for the classroom teacher to evaluate his conduct as increasingly more unfavorable.
10. The dropout was most frequently the youngest child in a family of four children.
11. The early school leaver was not looked to for leadership by his elementary school classmates.
12. The dropout was generally rated as growing normally both physically and psychologically.
13. On standardized tests in the elementary school, the dropout scored most frequently in the twentieth and thirtieth percentile groupings.

II. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The course of study has enabled the writer to draw the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. The records indicated that the dropouts had a wide range of scholastic ability, but that they came most frequently from the low ability group. These are primarily the students who should be looked upon as potential dropouts.
 2. The majority of the dropouts were frequently absent from school, thus making it more difficult to achieve the absolute standards demanded of them by today's educative process. Students in the elementary school
-

who have poor attendance records should receive special attention in respect to promotion before they are academically prepared.

3. As a whole, the group registered poor personality adjustments and poor conduct habits. Elementary school teachers should recognize that these factors are very instrumental in identifying potential dropouts.
4. Leadership qualities do not characterize the dropout. An essential element of classroom guidance by the elementary school teacher should be that of including activities through which each student develops some responsibilities of leadership.

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APPENDIX

Name _____ School Dropped From _____
School _____ Year Dropped Out _____
Yrs. At Elem. Sch. _____ Reason For Drop _____

Attendance: K - 3 - 6 -
1 - 4 -
2 - 5 -

Number of Grades Retained _____

Grades: K - 3 - 6 -
1 - 4 -
2 - 5 -

Reading Level _____

Number of Schools Attended: K - 3 -
1 - 4 - 6 -
2 - 5 -

With Whom the Dropout Lived _____

No. of Siblings _____ Brothers: Yng. _____ Old. _____
Sisters: Yng. _____ Old. _____

Occupation of Parents: Mother _____
Father _____

Who Supports the Family _____

Conduct Ratings: K - 3 - 6 -
1 - 4 -
2 - 5 -

APPENDIX I - continued

Comments from Pupil Guidance Card:

Comments from Parent-Teacher Conference Summaries:

Standardized Test Scores:

Given Test	Grade Given	Raw Score	Percentile	Grade Equiv.
Met. Reading Readiness				
California Reading				
Otis Mental Ability				
Iowa Ev. Pub. Bas. Ar.				

APPENDIX II

Mr. Gerald Robinson,
Supervisor of Research and Statistics
Des Moines Public Schools
1800 Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa

Dear Mr. Robinson,

In accordance with your wishes I would like to submit a brief description of the field study I propose to undertake. This study would serve as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science in Education degree granted by Drake University.

The tentative title of my project is "Identification of Characteristics of Dropouts in the Elementary School" (within a selected area of Des Moines). Class lists will be compiled of the sixth grade classes of the feeder elementary schools to Woodrow Wilson Junior High School during the school years 1958-1959, 1959-1960, and 1960-1961. Those who voluntarily dropped out of school before completing twelfth grade will be identified. The elementary cumulative records of those voluntary dropouts will then be examined. From the information obtained, statistical tables will be formulated concerning factors characteristic of these dropouts.

May I take this opportunity to express my appreciation for the cooperation given me by yourself and your secretary. I look forward to working with you more closely in the near future.

Respectfully,

Charles D. Buchanan